

SANSOM STREET PLANS EXPLAINED

Councils Hear the Public Ledger Co. Request to Connect Buildings

OPPOSITION HAS FADED

Traffic Not Interrupted by the Bridge and Tunnel Proposal

The question of the connections between the Curtis Building and the proposed \$5,000,000 twin structure of the Public Ledger Company, to occupy the block between Sixth and Seventh, Walnut and Sansom streets, came up for a hearing yesterday in City Hall before the Joint Committee on Finance and Surveys. The proposal was for a nominal vacating of Sansom street in order that communication between the two great structures might be had by bridges and tunnels. While no suggestion had been made that the street was to be closed, it was the earnest view that such was the case that was the basis of opposition which developed at yesterday's meeting. Another hearing will take place next Monday afternoon.

Company Welcomes Amendments

Chairman Joseph P. Gaffney, of the Finance Committee, presided and Robert E. Lambertson, chairman of the Surveys Committee, sat at his right hand. Frank Rogers Donahue, counsel for the publishing companies, was the first speaker. The resolution and the ordinance had been drafted by the city authorities, he said, and the companies welcomed any amendments that would insure the legal rights of the people and his clients. When that situation had been made clear several Councilmen suggested that an ordinance might be drafted embodying all the desires of the publishing companies without technically striking the street from the city plan.

In opening the meeting Mr. Gaffney suggested that advocates of the ordinance speak first. Mr. Donahue then arose and spoke more than a half hour, outlining completely the plans of the publishing companies, what was desired in connection with Sansom street and how the construction of the new building would guard Independence Hall against a fire hazard. Mr. Donahue spoke, in part, as follows:

"About one-quarter of this new building and the space required when complete will be devoted to an auditorium, seating 3000 to 3500 people. In which it is proposed to conduct public concerts, at which such organizations as the Philadelphia Orchestra will come down to this district and play for the public at nominal prices and by other organizations free of cost to those attending same."

No Traffic Objection

"At the request of the city officials a traffic report was made which has been embodied in the ordinance; and I want to say for the benefit of the committee and those present that this report was prepared from what might be termed an adverse standpoint. Some of the criticism that has been made of this project was foreseen over a year ago, when it was first suggested. This report was made with the view of determining whether there could be any real valid traffic objection to this project."

"It lasted for a period of eight days as shown in this report, the official copy of which will be given to the committee, and it shows as stated in the ordinance that 90 per cent of the pedestrian traffic is to the Curtis Building and 80 per cent of the vehicular traffic is either to the Curtis or the Public Ledger Buildings. When these buildings are completed, the Curtis Publishing Company, which is the owner of the new building now on Walnut, Sansom, Sixth and Seventh streets, will be the only abutting owner on the south side, and the Public Ledger Company will be the only abutting owner on the north side."

Will Own Each Side of Street

"In other words, the two companies will own each side of the street to the exclusion of every other tenant or owner. At the present time, the wagons and trucks of the Public Ledger Company, as you know, have been centering on Sixth street. At times there are perhaps twenty-five, thirty or forty of these vehicles on that street, which results as you also know in some obstruction. Under the new plan and the proposed use of Sansom street, the vehicles will be placed in Sansom street. All services from the Public Ledger Building and from the Curtis Building will be exclusively on Sansom street, thus removing all that traffic from Sixth and Chestnut streets."

"As I stated in opening, the Sixth street wall of the new building will go back an average of ten to twelve feet, free of cost to the city."

"The Curtis Building, which is completed, is ten to twelve feet back of the old line of the Ledger Buildings now. That wall was put back voluntarily at the suggestion of Mr. Curtis when this present building was erected, without cost to the city and without the suggestion, I believe, of any city official."

"The permanent line on Chestnut street is to be sixty feet. Five feet is

to be taken from each side, and we are prepared to put the building back on the new line on Chestnut street without, of course, claiming any damages whatsoever from the city."

"The building is to be ten stories in height, a duplicate in size, design and construction of the present Curtis Building, and it is proposed to start the construction of that building about the first of the year, or as soon as the details can be completed."

Never Proposed to Shut Street

"I want to say right here for the information of those who have taken an interest in this matter that it has never been proposed to shut off Sansom street from any one wanting to go driving or walking through there and look on Independence Hall. You gentlemen, as business men, will realize how impossible it would be for the company to close Sansom street, for the newspaper at the highest point of activity at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, to have this street cut off for vehicles."

"I want to say further that the present assessed valuation of this block from Chestnut to Sansom, Sixth to Seventh, is approximately \$1,800,000. The assessment of the present Curtis Building, completed some years ago, is approximately \$1,800,000, and it is to be assumed that when this Public Ledger Building is completed the assessment will perhaps run into five or six million dollars after the large sum for cost of completion is spent."

"That means, gentlemen, an increased assessment and consequent increased payment of taxes to the city of Philadelphia of a sum approximating \$1,000,000 to \$1,500,000 a year, not to mention the enhancing fact as to the value of the surrounding property. And I might say that this has been demonstrated by the present Curtis Building now on the site from Sansom to Walnut. It has resulted in increasing the hand of the city of Philadelphia. You will recall that the Penn Mutual Building was erected at the southeast corner of Sixth and Walnut streets. I believe, after the present Curtis Building or after the project was made."

"These are the material conditions that should affect your judgment. But, aside from that, we feel that it is a monstrous request that has justification for it. We will perhaps be the most exclusive users of this street for our trucks, wagons and employees of our building."

No Desire to Close Street

"The question of vacating Sansom street was suggested by the city authorities," Mr. Martin said. "I mean that Mr. Albright (chief of the Surveys Bureau) and Mr. Datesman (Public Works Director) suggested it as the best way of accomplishing it. We have no desire to close up the street as stated. We do want the right to go over and cut under without having to take it up each time with Council."

"We had no desire to put up gates. These were designed also at the sugges-

tion of the authorities. We have no desire to close up Sansom street, but using it as we do at all hours we shall keep it open."

Richard J. Beamish, directing editor of the Philadelphia Press, who was looked upon as leading the opposition, was then addressed by William E. Finley, Select Councilman from the Thirty-ninth Ward.

"The Ledger people have come here out of fairness to state their side of the question," Mr. Finley said. "I do not know who Mr. Beamish represents, the Press or the public, but I think Mr. Beamish should state his side of the question."

There may be an objection which Mr. Beamish has covered up which the Ledger people should be able to meet. It is out of fairness to the Philadelphia public that Mr. Beamish should state his side of the question."

"Perhaps when there is another ordinance submitted by the Public Ledger Mr. Beamish may have another objection. I do not like to see any two-cent newspaper try to make capital out of another two-cent newspaper. It's small-town stuff."

Charles Seger, Select Councilman from the Seventh Ward, then interpolated a question whether Mr. Beamish would be willing to withdraw his objections. Mr. Beamish then said:

"I represent no one but myself. I would say offhand that the vacation of such an important street as Sansom street is to Philadelphia is the principal objection. The city should have a sufficient right over that thoroughfare. We agree that the Public Ledger and the Curtis Publishing Company, for all proper uses of their business, should have all the avenues they need open to them. It is an important and beautiful building, but I take the position personally that the city of Philadelphia should reserve the supreme right to that thoroughfare."

The following dialogue then took place:

Mr. Donahue—"I submit he is not answering any part of Mr. Seger's question."

Mr. Gaffney—"The only question is one of control and custody of that street to remain in the city."

Mr. Seger—"Why not answer yes or no? Would you, Mr. Beamish, be satisfied to withdraw your objection to an ordinance that gives them all the privileges they wanted, with the exception of the vacation of the street?"

Mr. Beamish—"I would personally be favorable to an ordinance giving them all the rights that have been named with the exception of the vacation of the street."

William J. Campbell, of the City History Society of Philadelphia, spoke in part as follows:

"Philadelphia is noted for improvements. Here is one of the greatest that has been heard of for many years, and if it were necessary to give the street to this company—and I am not interested in this company—they do not know I am here—we ought to do anything to favor this great public improvement. I went at 3 o'clock on Friday through the street and I was the only man who went through it. Anything

should be done to get this wonderful thing for Philadelphia."

Daniel Crawford, president of the Operative Builders' Association, said:

"I think I can say that Mr. Curtis wants to build something which will be a monument to himself and a credit to the city, and will bring back to the city very handsomely in the way of return. The gentlemen have been talking about the city retaining the title to the bed of that street. It has always been my understanding that any right that comes either under or over the bed of a highway can be rescinded by Council."

or do not want to set myself up as an authority on that, but I feel that it is true. The building that Mr. Curtis proposes to erect is more than a bridge across the street. Councils have granted in many instances the privilege of building bridges across the street or building tunnels under the street to connect two buildings, and in most cases that I know of in this city they have been merely a temporary affair, perhaps a steel bridge or a brick tunnel under the street. It did not mean very much, if the privilege was not rescinded, would not affect greatly the value of the building."

Argues for Easement

"It is not said for Mr. Curtis or any being to build the permanent structure that he proposes to put there and not have ownership in the bed of that street, and he is perfectly willing, from what I understand here, to permit an easement of the street so that pedestrians would have the right and vehicles have the right forever to go through. While I am not a lawyer and do not propose to set myself up as an authority, I have had some experience in closing streets. If it ever became necessary to dispose of those properties I realize that that question of title would arise, which is a mighty important one with Mr. Curtis right now. From the remarks I have heard the city of Philadelphia will retain all that is necessary for it to retain if there is the agreement incorporated in this ordinance to permit of this easement I have referred to."

"Mr. Donahue has been asked as to the value of what Mr. Curtis is giving up compared with the value the city was giving up. While I do not set myself up as an expert of that item, I

have made a little calculation. I figure he is giving up 2500 feet on Sixth street and 2000 feet on Chestnut street at a value of not less than \$20 a foot, or \$50,000, and if he were to go into court and claim damages his damages would be three times that. If you give him Sansom street you give 16,000 square feet. I think a fair price for Sansom street, located as it is, would be not over \$5 a foot, or \$80,000."

"I am using those figures merely as a comparison. Sansom street is not worth over 25 per cent of the value of the frontage of Chestnut street and Sixth street—make the figures anything you like. Mr. Curtis is giving to the city just as much in value of real ground as he is getting back."

Arnold W. Brunner, architect of the new building, said:

"Of course it would be impossible to close Sansom street physically to build the building and preserve the Curtis Building. Nobody's idea for a minute. It could not be done without ruining the whole property. What is necessary is to have the privilege to put bridges here and there, as the business of these two great institutions increases, so that they can connect one building with the other. It is also necessary for their business to connect Sansom street and have certain rights under the roadway which, of course, won't hurt anybody. As I understood it from Mr. Roberts, from the engineer, the way to secure those advantages was to ask for the vacation of the street, a legal term I do not understand."

Not Asking for Damages

"These two buildings with these two great egresses will free Sansom street as it has never been freed before, and we are giving space on all sides, even on Chestnut street, where we are going back beyond your legal line and asking no damages."

Louis C. Block, of the Philadelphia Automobile Trade Association, said:

"Just a few words. In the first place we have talked of the increased revenue from taxes, the improvement that the building would be to the city and the improvement of the locality, of public enterprise and so on. To my way of thinking these things are a secondary consideration. We have no objection to

the Curtis Company and the Public Ledger Company having all the improvements they want. But it comes down to the fact whether the public has the right to give any street to any corporation or body, and the main big fact is that the city of Philadelphia has too few streets to take care of the traffic. Traffic conditions are going to become worse from time to time as time goes on."

Ira D. Garman, Select Councilman from the Forty-sixth Ward, spoke as follows:

"I want to say I am thoroughly well acquainted with the district. It seems to me that Sansom street from Sixth to Broad street is a very valuable franchise today. Instead of closing it, the important thing would be to open Sansom street to a more thorough business section. Sansom street from Tenth to

Twelfth street is one of the busiest streets today and ought to be well paved and small shops should be opened there to take traffic off Chestnut street."

PROBE MILK CO. FAILURE

New York Prosecutor Will Delve Into "Farmers' Accounts"

New York, April 1.—The "John Doe" inquiry into the high cost of milk here took a new turn yesterday, when Assistant District Attorney Dooling, who is conducting the inquiry, announced he proposed to investigate the causes for the recent appointment of receivers for the Co-operative Milk Producers' Marketing Association and Country Milk Company, which quit business with liabilities of nearly \$400,000. Roswell D. Cooper, president of the

Dairyman's League, is president of the two concerns. At hearings in connection with the January milk strike here it was charged the companies had been organized by farmers for the sole purpose of forcing milk distributors to meet their terms, and had been discontinued as soon as this result was accomplished.



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